

# State of Delaware Child Protection Accountability Commission – Permanency for Adolescents Committee’s - APPLA Workgroup

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TUESDAY, JUNE 1, 2015 – 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

## In Attendance:

Karen Baker	CASA, Family Court
Tania Culley, Esq.	Office of the Child Advocate
Nakia Howard	CASA, Family Court
Felicia Kellum	Division of Family Services
Jennifer Kline, Esq.	CASA, Family Court
Beth Lussier	CASA, Family Court
Julie Miller	Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative
Rachael Neff	Family Court
Amanda Sipple	Office of the Child Advocate

## I. Welcome and Introductions

Tania Culley welcomed the members of the workgroup. Members of the workgroup introduced themselves.

## II. Discussion of the Prioritized Recommendations<sup>1</sup>

The workgroup reviewed the approved recommendations and action plan from March 27, 2015 beginning with the legal system area.

Felicia Kellum stated that Division of Family Services (DFS) has reached out to the Department of Justice (DOJ) regarding the representation of the position of the Permanency Planning Committee (PPC) at the Permanency Hearing. **Ms. Kellum or DOJ will provide an update at the next meeting.**

Rachael Neff stated that Family Court representatives are reviewing the timeframe of permanency hearings. Additionally, Family Court through the Court Improvement Program (CIP) will be reviewing APPLA in relation to Federal criteria and State Court rules at the upcoming CIP meeting. Ms. Neff is also working on a fall 2015 training for CIP attorneys. **Ms. Neff will provide an update at the next meeting.**

Ms. Culley stated that Deputy Child Advocates and Attorneys Guardian *ad litem* for Office of the Child Advocate have been notified that APPLA is not an appropriate permanency plan for children under the age of 16.

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Ms. Culley stated that Kelly Ensslin, Esq. will be presenting with DFS the Best Practices for Finding Permanency for Children Experiencing Foster Care at the Annual Foster Parent Conference in May.

Ms. Neff stated that the Family Court is expected to discuss the recommendation to review a youth's permanency plan at least twice a year at the upcoming Judge's meeting. **Ms. Neff will provide an update at the next meeting.**

The workgroup then reviewed the approved recommendations and action plan from March 27, 2015 for the DFS treatment, legal and mental health system areas.

No update was provided regarding the recommendation to review of youth with an APPLA plan should occur at least annually by the DFS Permanency Planning Committee to ensure it is still the appropriate plan. **Ms. Kellum or Frank Perfiniski will provide an update at the next meeting.**

No update was available regarding the recommendation to fully fund and make readily available adoption and post-adoption services to prospective adoptive parents and guardians. **Frank Perfiniski will provide an update at the next meeting.**

Ms. Neff stated that the Permanency Options Workgroup is coordinating with stakeholders to develop a tool and training regarding the various permanency plans. For example, can a child have the permanency plan of guardianship when there is no guardian identified? **Ms. Neff will provide an update at the next meeting.**

No update was provided regarding the recommendation to promptly complete the permanency work necessary to recruit adoptive families once the permanency plan has been changed to TPR by the PPC. Preferably, this should be immediate transfer of the child case to a Permanency worker. In the alternative, treatment workers must be trained in these functions. **Mr. Perfiniski will provide an update at the next meeting.**

Ms. Culley stated that the Permanency Options Workgroup will work to update its tool and training regarding financial supports available to families who wish to make a permanent commitment to a child. Additionally, the Permanency Options Workgroup will coordinate with Interagency Committee on Adoption to ensure permanency options training is offered to mental health professionals who treat children in foster care. Ms. Culley stated that OCA and DFS are coordinating efforts to increase the quality and pool of professionals conducting bonding assessments. **Ms. Neff and Ms. Culley will provide updates at the next meeting.**

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### III. Additional Tasks of Workgroup

Ms. Kellum stated that DFS is working to review cases of children who have a permanency plan of APPLA and will be under age 16 on September 29, 2015. All of these youth are expected to have a review hearing prior to September 29, 2015 with the objective of changing their permanency plan. DFS, OCA, CASA and the Family Court will receive the list of 25 youth in this category and work with their agencies in a collective effort to have these cases be reviewed in compliance with federal law by September 29, 2015. **All parties will provide updates at the next meeting.**

### IV. Future Meeting Date

Friday, September 11, 2015, 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

### V. Public Comment and Adjournment

There being no public comment the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

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<sup>1</sup> – A copy of the Approved Recommendations and Action Plan are attached.

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